

**NELLAIAPPAR TEMPLE**, brimming with life characteristics of its people and activities for the past 1300 years stands in the heart of the city. Where it is difficult to find a single slab or a pillar which does not have the art work. The person who managed the construction work left no stone unturned or to say no stone was left un-sculptured. The Temple complex is so rich with intricate lifelike sculptural works that is unimaginable unless you see it yourself. The sheer impressiveness of the temple having a mysterious or magical power that bewitches the people towards it. The Temple, tradition, sculptures and the people whom we come across even today leaves us with a sense of pride and pride-yearning that our culture, architectural and fine arts skills should be kept for our future generations, indeed a challenging taste in view of the waves of changes we face now in our lives.



“மருந்து அவை; மந்திரம், மறுமை நன்னெறி அவை மற்றும் எல்லாம்;  
அருந்துயர் கெடும்; அவர் நாமமே சிந்தைசெய், நன்னெஞ்சமே!—  
பொருந்து தண்புறவினில் கொன்றை பொன்சொரிதர, துன்று பைம்பூஞ்-  
செருத்தி செம்பொன்மலர் திரு நெல்வேலி உறை செல்வர்தாமே....”

NELLAIAPPAR  
TEMPLE

#1 INTRODUCTION



# HISTORY - A TRAVEL THROUGH VARIOUS STORIES

A brahmin named vedasharma had kept the paddy for drying in a greenland and went to take bath. Unexpectedly a sudden rain appeared by which vedasharma feared of the paddy getting wet. At that moment lord shiva created a fence around the paddy and so the city got its name TIRU-NEL-VELI ( NEL-paddy, VELI - fence)



Once a brahmin named ramakonar was carrying milk for the abishekam of lord shiva ,he got slipped by a bamboo root which directly poured milk to the stone of lord shiva and so he was called as "VANA VENUN-ATHAR". In this scenario there is another significance that the pot carrying milk hit the god's stone so the lingam head in slightly slanted.



A pandian king named SWETHAKETHU was saved from yama when he accidentally threw the pasakayiru on lord shiva himself. Finally the king attained moksha by the god's grace and was called KOOTRUTHEITHA NELVELI- periyapura-na song



18th century



**NELLAI GOVINDHAR** The shrine of Govindaraja Perumal, affectionately called "Nellai Govindar", is in a reclining posture. There is a 1000 pillared hall which is significantly important.

1756



**VASANTHA MANDAPAM**, 100 pillars, built within the flower garden near sangili mandapam

1647



**SANGILI MANDAPAM**, it was constructed by vadamalaippa pillai, consist of sculptures of kaama vigara kurangu, vaali, beeman...

1635



**UNJAL MANDAPAM**, co-constructed by serakulam piravi perumal pillayan. There are 96 pillars.

## A JUSTIFICATION TO THE SITE

NELLAI APPAR TEMPLE, the pride of tamilnadu stands in the heart of the city tirunelveli where it is difficult to find a pillar or slab without art sculpt



**NANDHI MANDAPAM**



The nandhi is made of sunnambu sangu sea shell lime stone mix  
Temple was brimming with life characteristics of its people and activities for past 1300 years



**TAMIRA SABHA**

The temple, tradition, the sculptures and the people whom we came across even today leave us with a sense of pride and learning our culture and tradition

The cosmic dance of lord shiva is performed in this tamira sabha which is copper sabha, one of the pancha sabha.

"WE SOAKED IN PEACE  
WE SOAKED IN AMBIENCE  
AND SOAKED IN HISTORICAL PEACE....."

## A TIMELINE THROUGH SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

7th century A.D



**SINDHU POONDHURAI** - TEMPLE TREE (BAMBOO)

1155



**A FLAG** WAS SET UP NEAR NANDHI MANDAPAM

1258-1308



**POLLA PILLAYAR** WAS SCULPTED, TEMPLE WALL RAISED

1504



**RULES OF THE WOODEN CHARIOT** WAS WRITTEN BY ARINAYAKA MUDHALIYAR.

1546



**MANI MANDAPAM** BY Nindraser nedumaran pandiyan. 1st **MUSICAL PILLAR** IN TAMILNADU.

1547-1634



**SOMAVARA MANDAPAM**, consist of 78 pillars in the northern side of siva mandapam. The abishekam of panchamoorthigal.

**NELLAI APPAR TEMPLE**



# CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

**STAGE I- Orientation , Measurement and Layout**

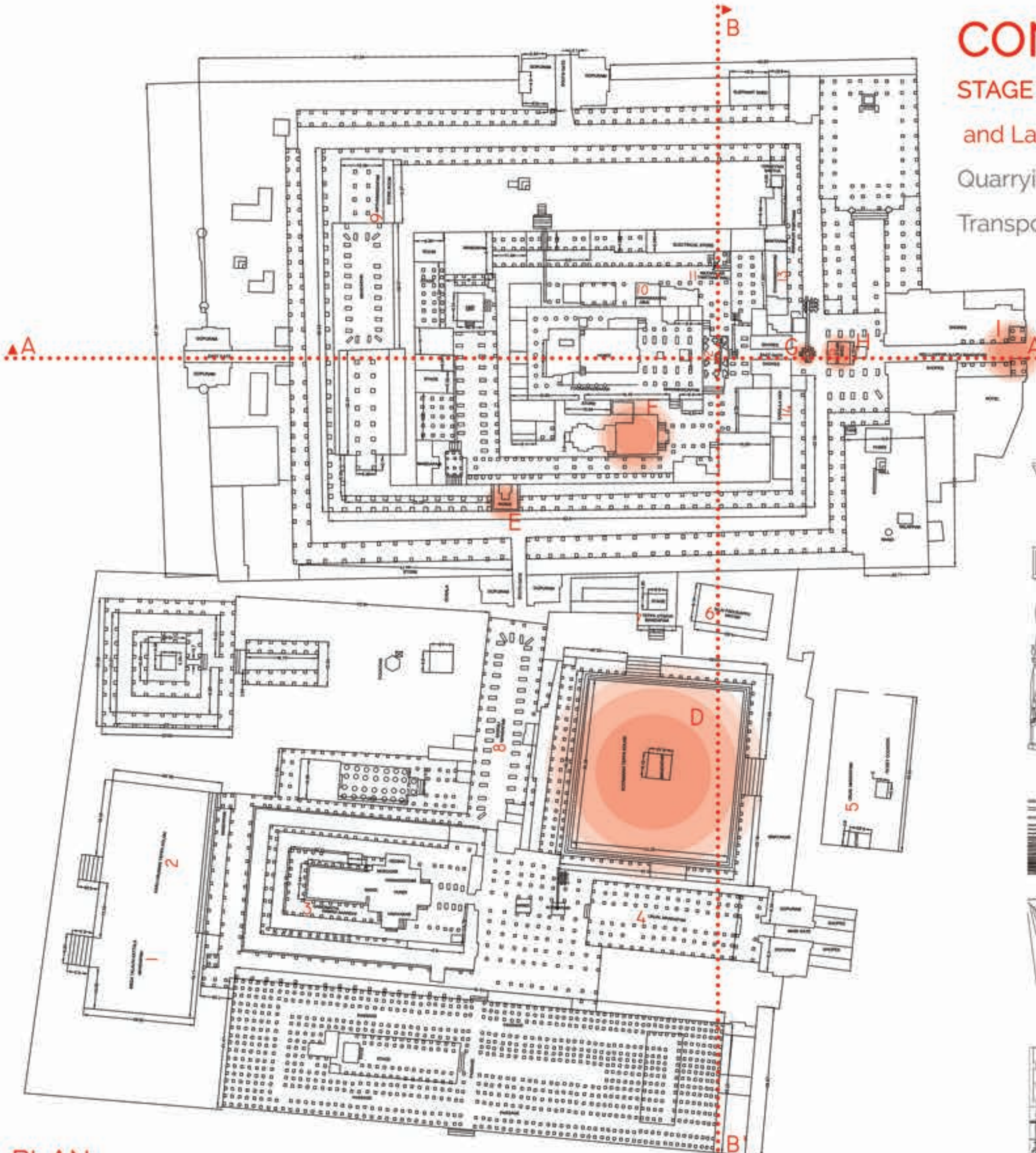
Quarrying of the stone  
Transportation of materials

**STAGE II- Carving on temple**

Cutting and Carving the stone  
Drawing in stones  
polishing the stone  
Tools and Equipments

**STAGE 3: Process of temple building**

Laying foundation  
Assembling Elements  
Joinery systems  
Plinth  
Wall  
Column Beams  
Mandapams  
Shikhara



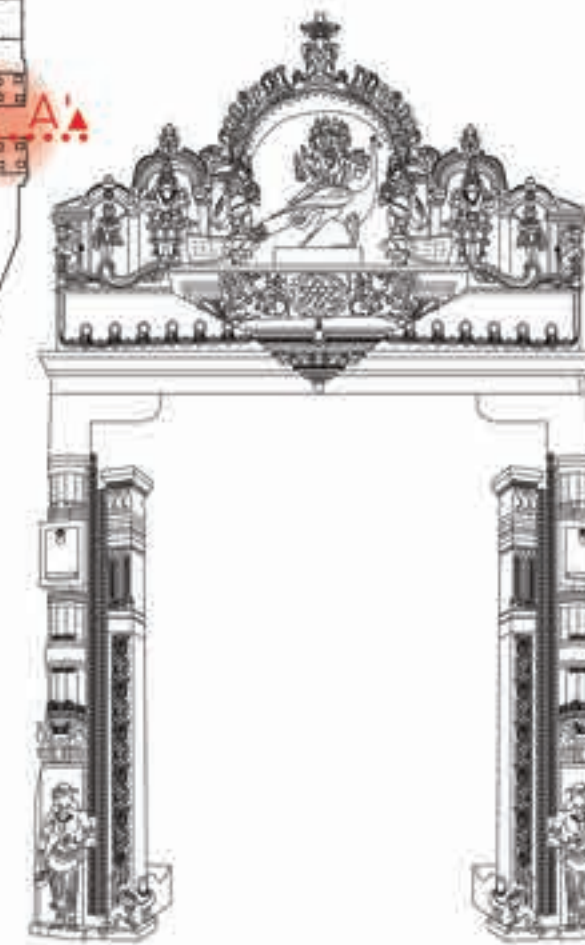
PLAN



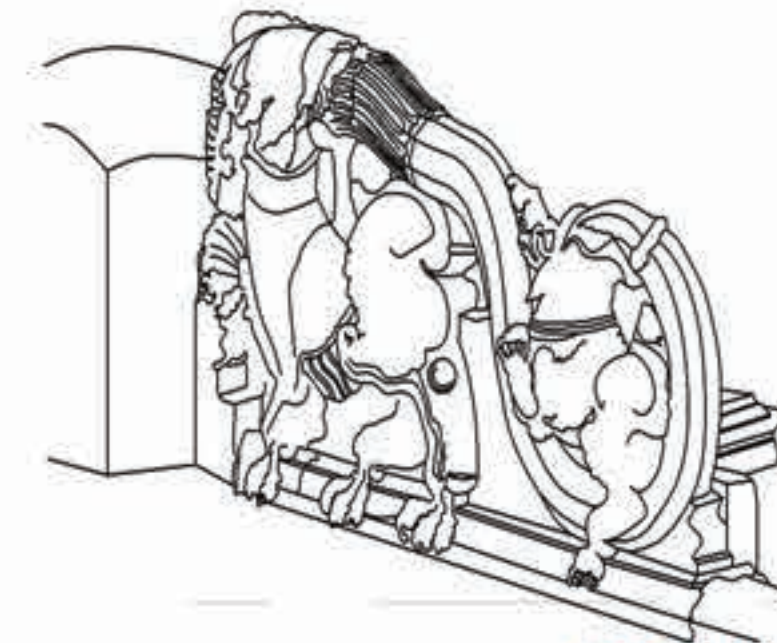
SECTION AA'



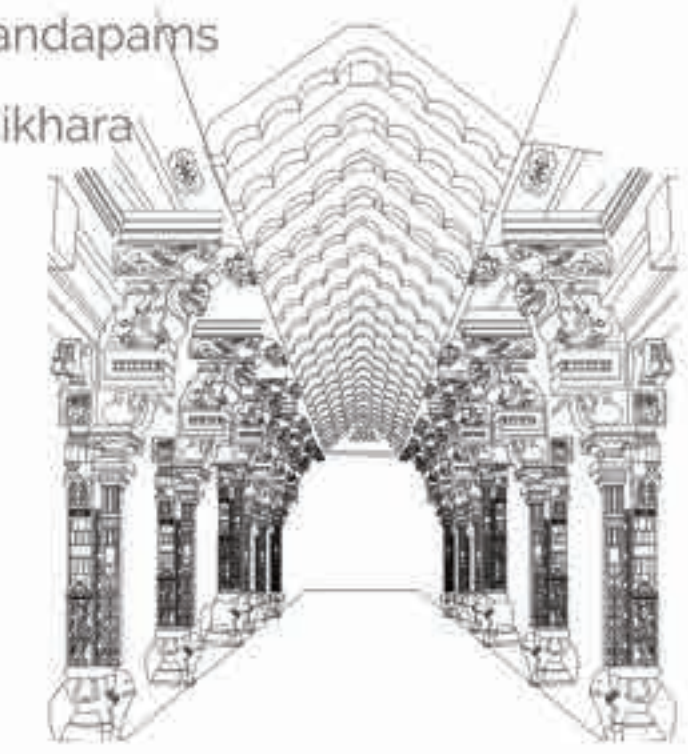
SECTION BB'



DETAIL G



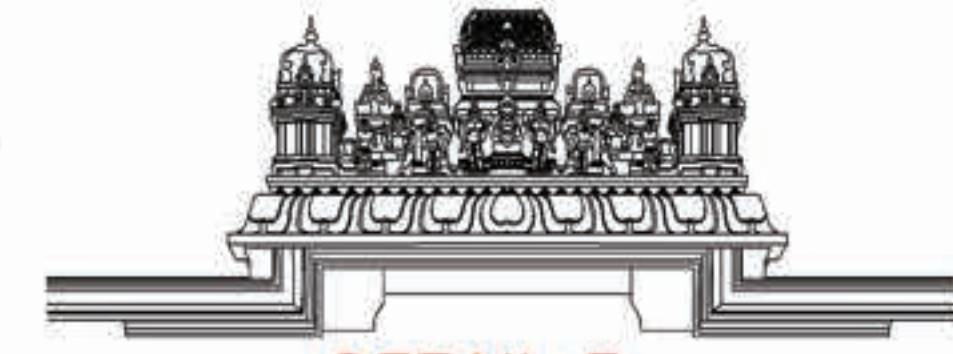
DETAIL H



DETAIL I



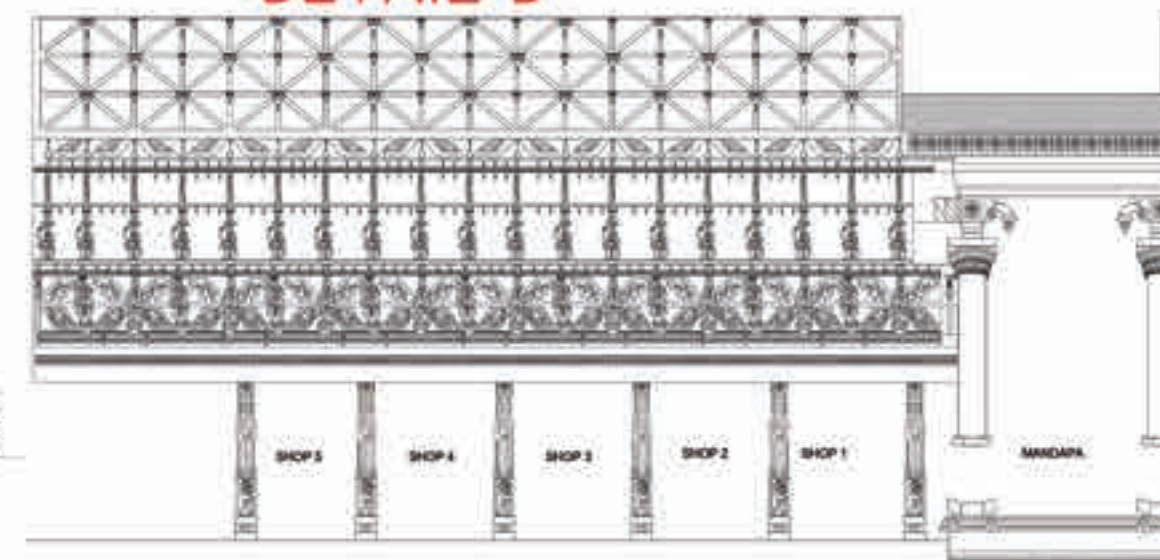
DETAIL D



DETAIL E



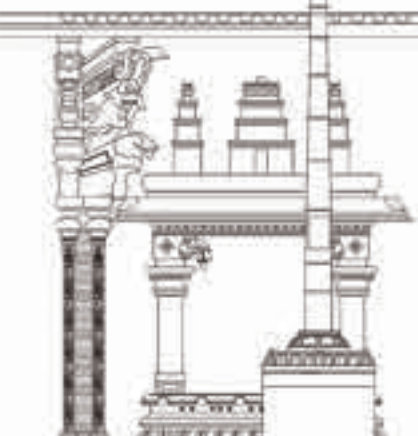
DETAIL F



DETAIL A



DETAIL B



DETAIL C

NELLAIAPPAR  
TEMPLE

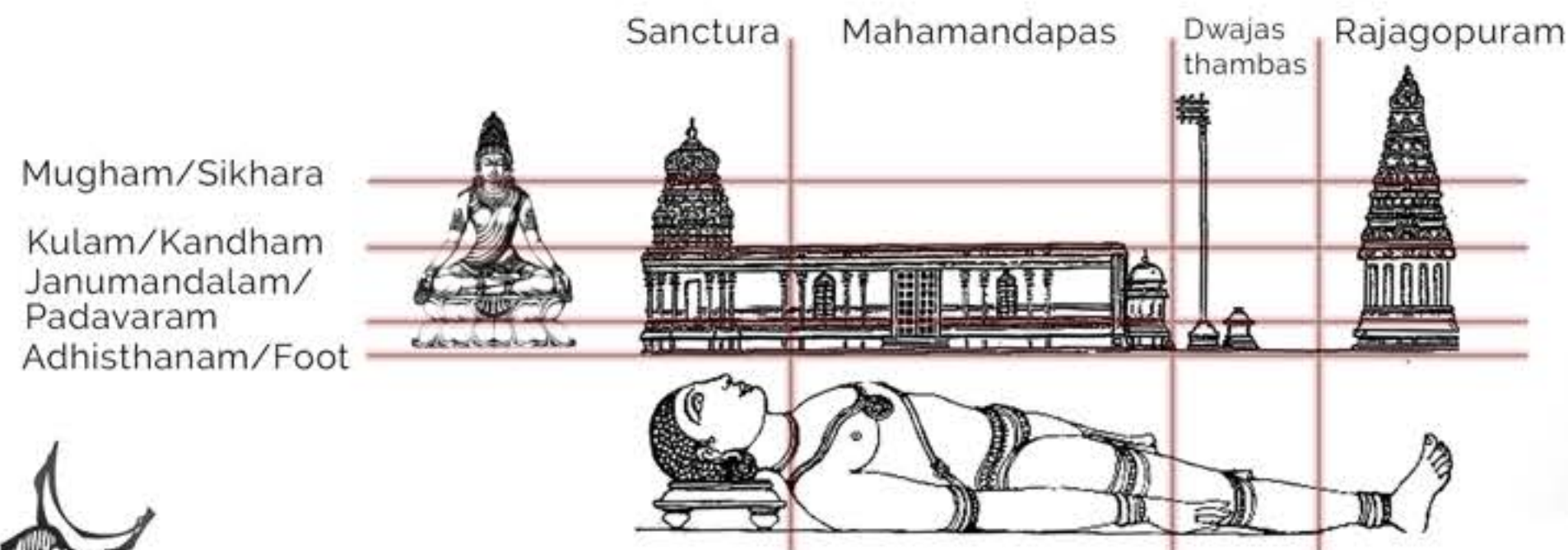
## #3 PLAN AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE



# Aspects of Temple Planning

There are generally sixteen layouts of the Temple Layout, But usually square and Rectangle (Agatra) are used and considered auspicious. The North/South orientation is generally Longer and Depth (Profit) must be larger than the Breadth (loss), hence we find the North South walls to be shorter than the East West Walls in this Nellaiappar Temple, Nellai. Principle shrines face the Sun and has entrance to the east. Thus the Movement towards the sanctuary along East West towards Deity. Construction begins with Garbha graha, and Artha Mandapa next to it with passage around the Deity for Devotee called Pradakshira Patha. Garbha graha is located within Vimana structure.

**Dravidian Architecture** is used in the temple, also called the Shilpa and the one who constructed is called Sthapati

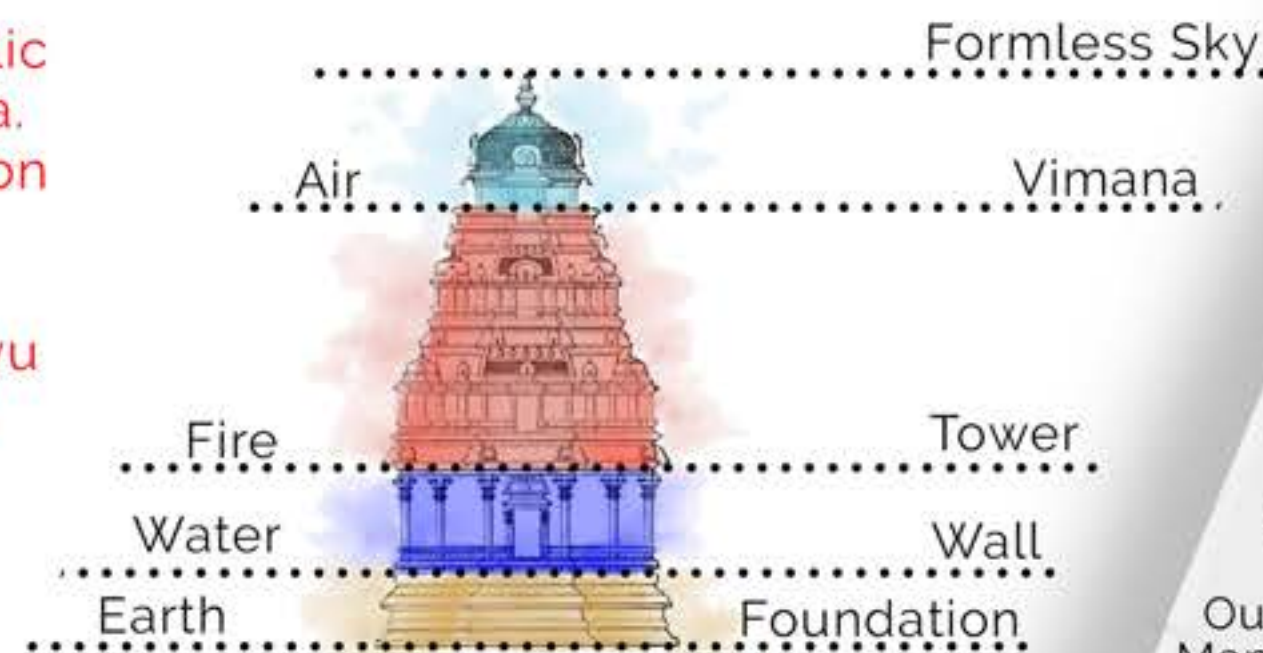


## Uses of Mandapas:

Kolu Mandapa - Navratri  
 Tamara Mandapa - Thiruvathurai  
 Ayirangkaal mandapa - ThiruKalyanam  
 Unjal Mandapa - after 3 days/Kalyana

There is also another symbolic representation of the Santura. It symbolises the constellation of five elements.

The Prithvi, Apaha, Tejas, Vayu Akasha being five elements and representing temple construction



## Symbolism of Santura Elements

## Evolution of Plan

### 7th Century

During Pandiyan Rule. Before the 7th century, Independent structures with Gopurams for Lord Shiva and Kandhimathi

Usually construction of the Temple begins with Garbha graha, which means womb chamber at the Bramasthana, Nucleus of Vaastu Purusha Yantra Mandala

Considering Temple and Human alike, Kodimaram and Balipeeda, are the main organs of Male and Female Respectively

### 1155 A.D

Kodimaram-a flagstaff, Balipeeda and Vahana were installed; these are the obstacles that protect sanctuary from impure

Development of Mandapas were basically for the assemblies Hall for the devotee; while passage around the Mandapas called Praharam were installed

### 1635 A.D

Evolution of Ther(Car) in 1504 A.D by the ruler Arinayala Mudhaliyar. Sangili mandapam was built connecting Main deity temple and Gandhimadhi Temple

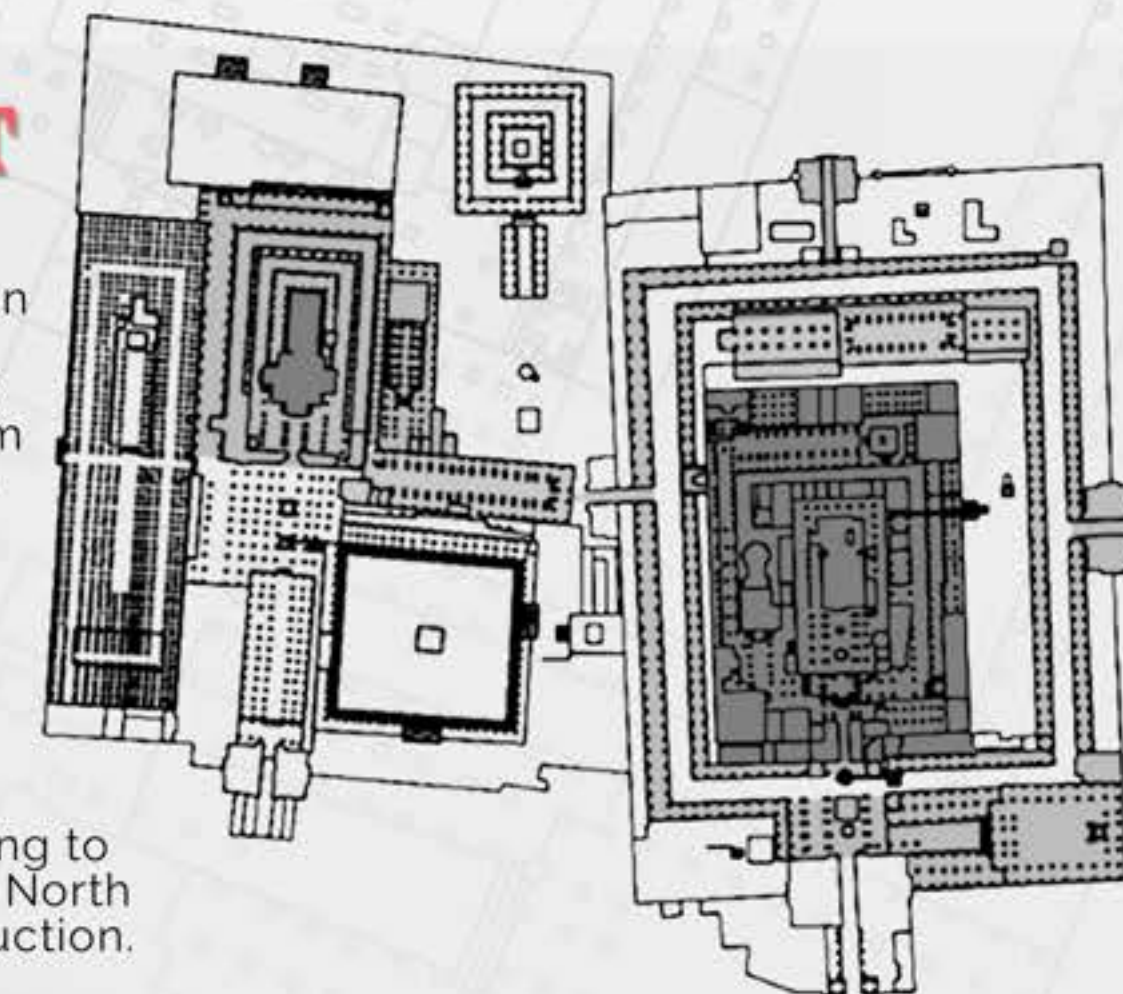
### 1647 A.D

Unjal Mandapam was constructed by the Ruler Serukulam Piranji Persumal. The Open yards around the Lord Shiva temple were covered with Lord Arumugham temple and mandapas for Assemblies.

### Till PRESENT

After 17th century, Under various Pandiyan Rulers, Ayiram Kaal Mandapam, Water Tank and Vasantha Mandapam were constructed by the Ruler Thiruvankada Krishna Mudhalayar

Outer the Temple structure, Many commercial spaces were provided. Four Entrance Spaces were constructed. The Main Entrance facing East leading to the main deity. The other on the North West sides of the Temple construction.





## LEGEND:

- 1 SANCTUARY
- 2 ARTHA MANDAPA
- 3 INNER PRADAKSHANA
- 4 OUTER PRADAKSHANA

VIMANA

The towering structure above the main shrine

KODIMARAM

In line with Shrine along with Balipeda

ARTHAMANDAPA

The Mandapa next to Garba Graha

LARGE MANDAPAS

Hall of Assembly of Devotee

PRADAKSHIRA

Passage around Mandapas

● NADA MANIMANDAPAM

● DHYANA MANDAPAM

● SOMVARA MANDAPAM

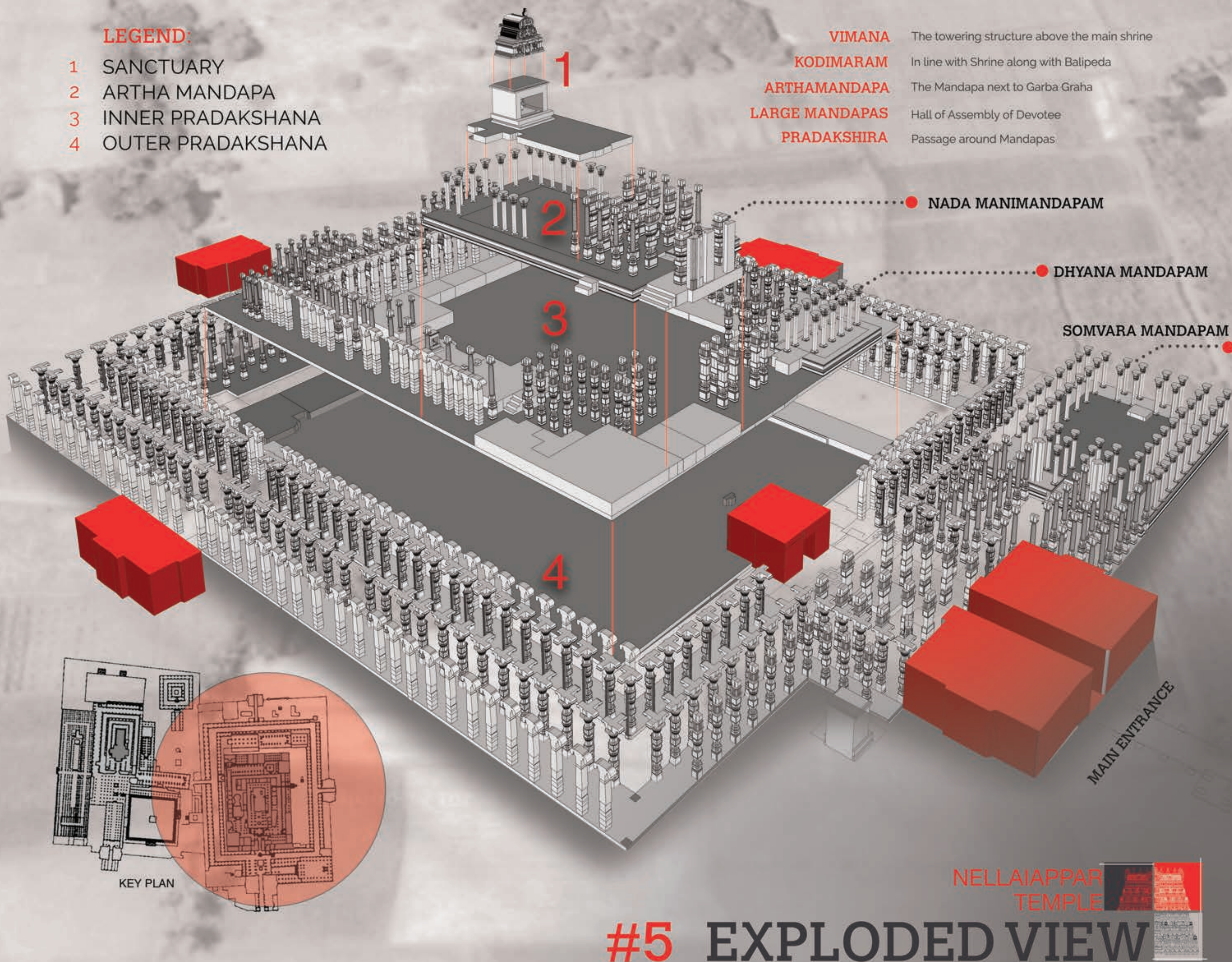
MAIN ENTRANCE

KEY PLAN

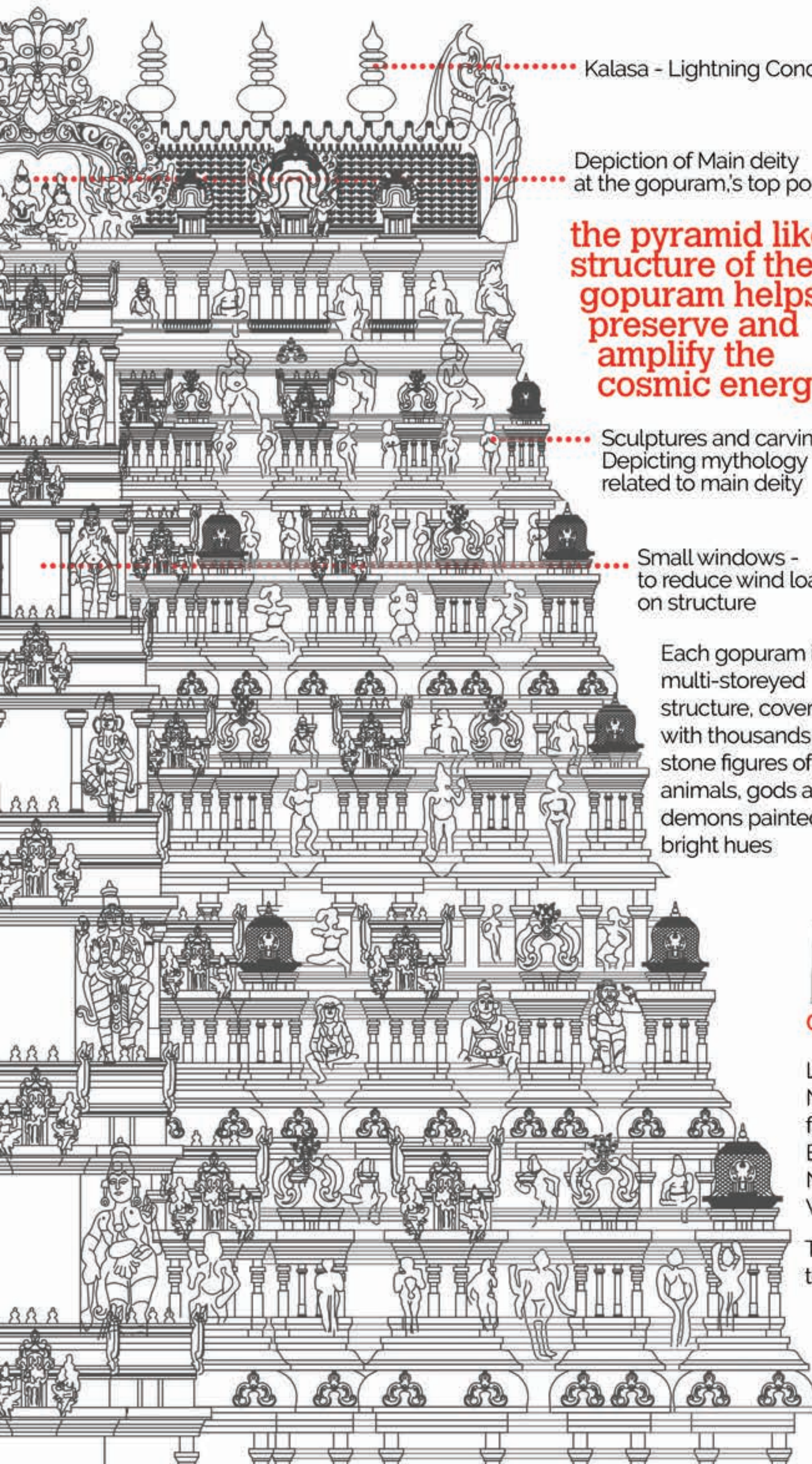
NELLAIAPPAR  
TEMPLE

#5

EXPLODED VIEW







Kalasa - Lightning Conductor

Depiction of Main deity at the gopuram's top portion

**the pyramid like structure of the gopuram helps to preserve and amplify the cosmic energy**

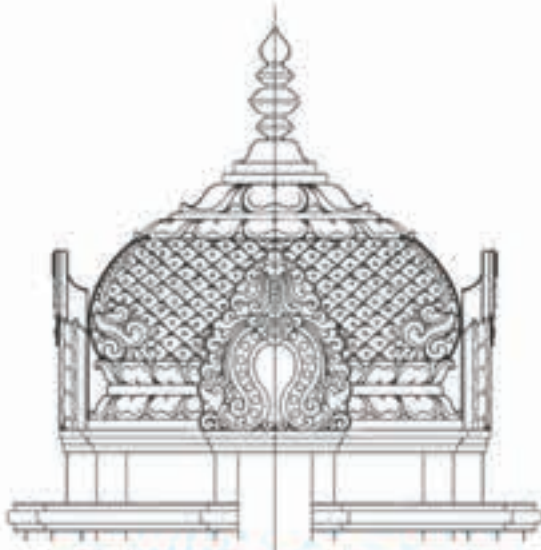
Sculptures and carvings-  
Depicting mythology related to main deity

Small windows -  
to reduce wind load on structure

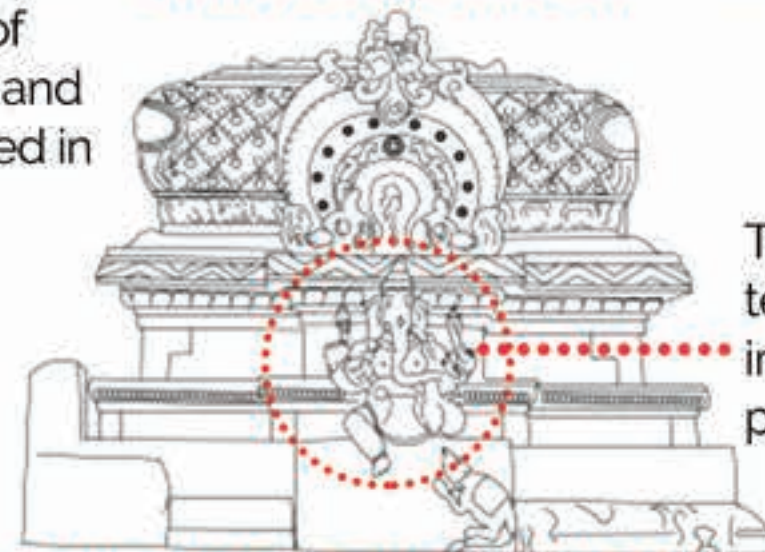
Each gopuram is a multi-storeyed structure, covered with thousands of stone figures of animals, gods and demons painted in bright hues



**GOPURAM OF GODESS PARAVATHI SHRINE**



**GOPURAM OF GOD KASIVISHWANATHAR**

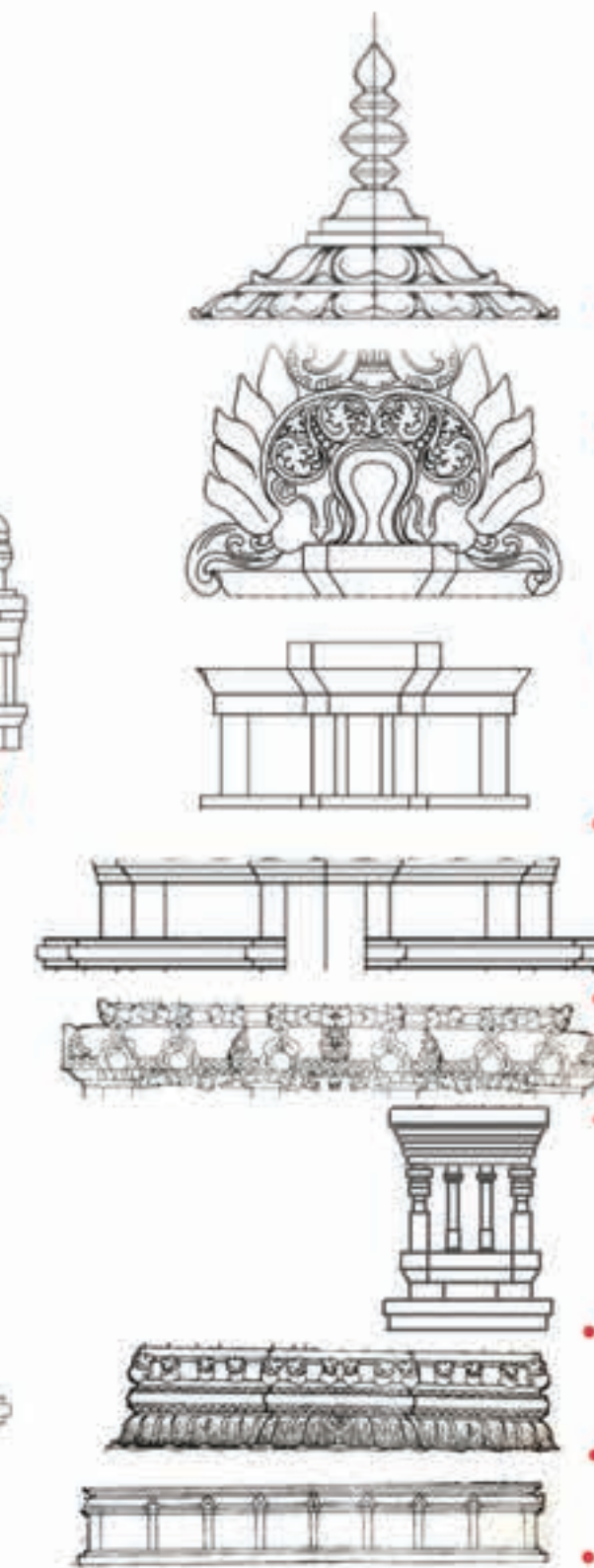


**GOPURAM OF GOD VINAYAGAR**

Like a typical Hindu temple in Dravidian style ,  
Nellaippar temple has gopurams in the four directions at the centre of each wall i.e.  
East - main entrance,  
North and south - side entrances,  
West - only opened on auspicious day

The outer gopuram presents steeply pyramidal tower encrusted with plaster figures

A Gopura is generally constructed with a massive stone base and a superstructure of brick and pilaster



According to the Puranas, the Gopurams were built by Muluthukanda Rama Pandiyan  
Nellaippar Temple has 5 gopurams in its outer wall enclosure

Final

Tower

Neck

Second Tala

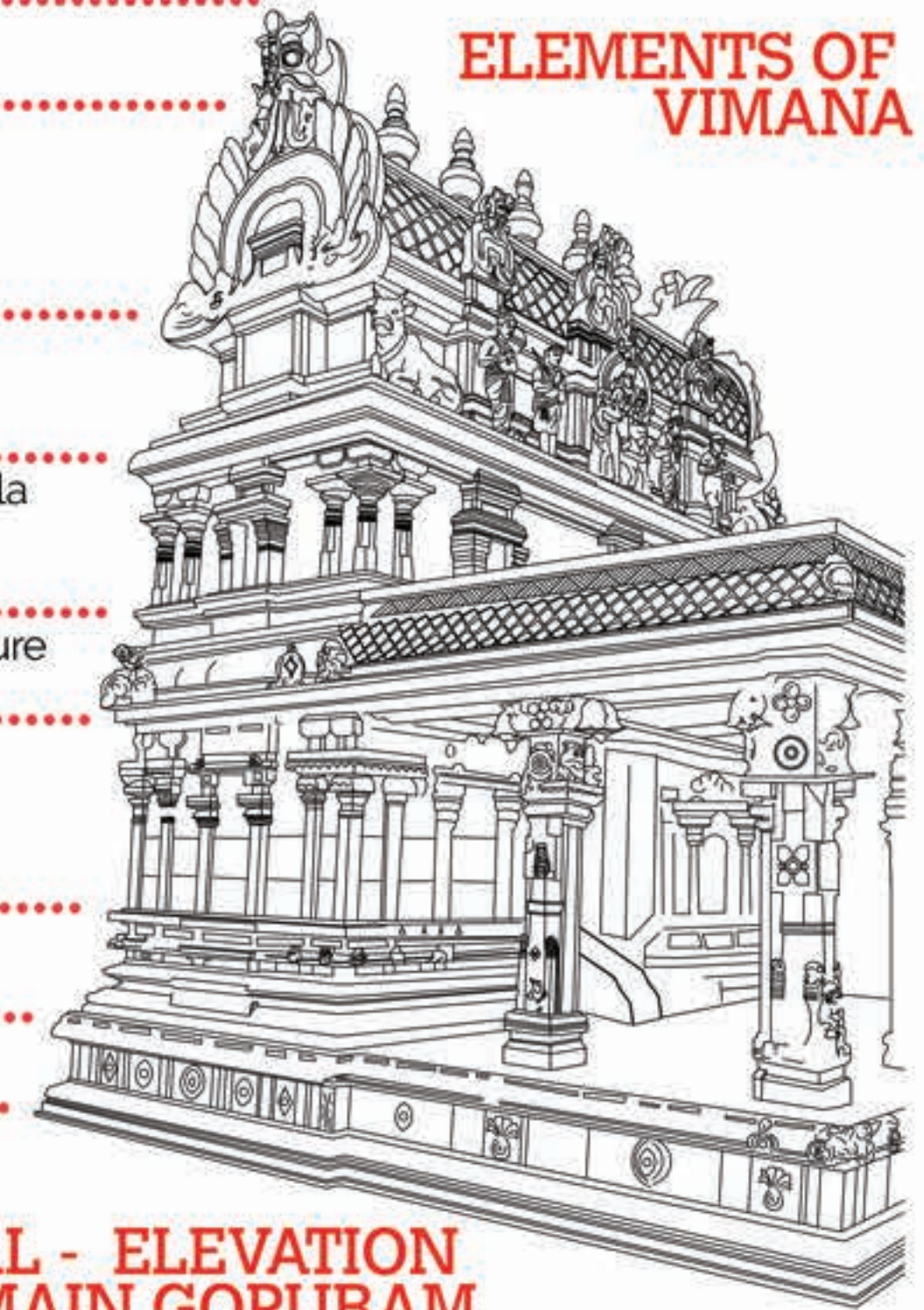
Entablature

Wall

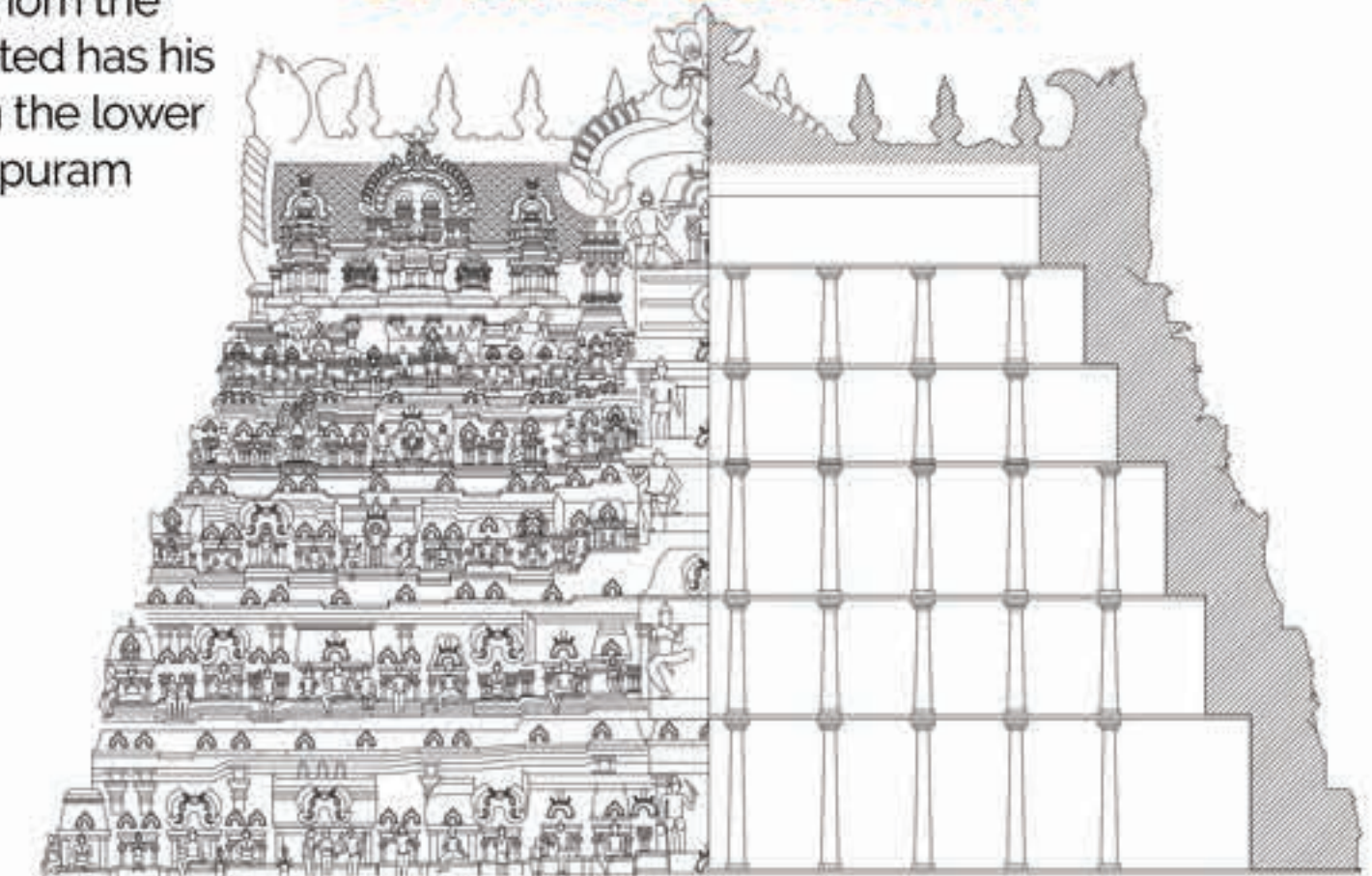
Plinth

Sub- Base

**ELEMENTS OF VIMANA**



**SECTIONAL - ELEVATION OF MAIN GOPURAM**



**NELLAIAPPAR TEMPLE**

**#6 GOPURAM**



**Location:** Centre of the Flower Garden

**Direction and Posture:** East

**Plan Shape:** Square

**Set up in:** Mid 18th Century

According to the temple Legend, this annual fete was believed to have introduced to mark the arrival of Spring Season. Lord and his Consorts are given aromatic bath which is believed to give a soothing relief to the deities from the scorching Sun.

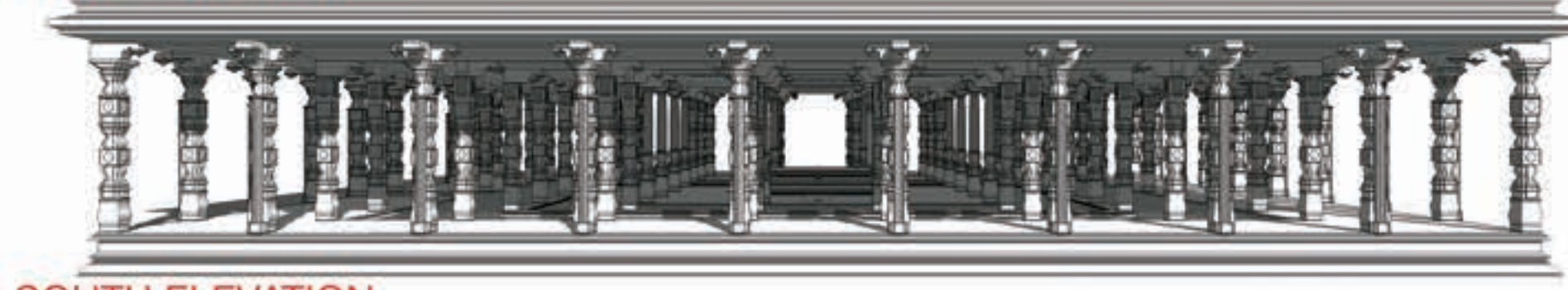
Punya Vachanam (purification rites), vaasthu santhi (worship of deity and lord of nature and their elements and natural forces as well as lord and deity of directions and environment) and samprokshanam (sprinkling of holy water as a symbolic representation of purification) rituals are performed by the temple priests.

In this beautifully decorated Vasanta Mandapam, Abhisekham which means (Holy Bath with aromatic ingredients) is performed to the deity, seated on the central platform.

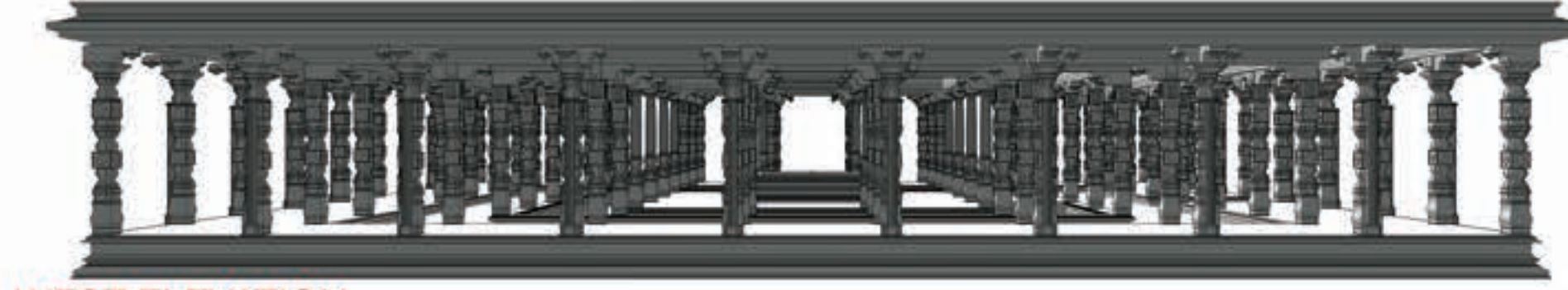
After the aromatic bath the deity is rendered with special harati. Later the deities were taken back to the temple.



**EAST ELEVATION**



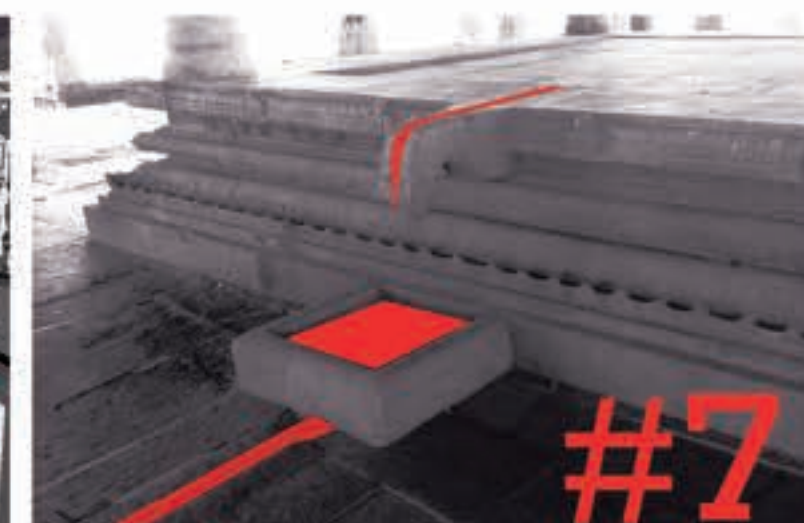
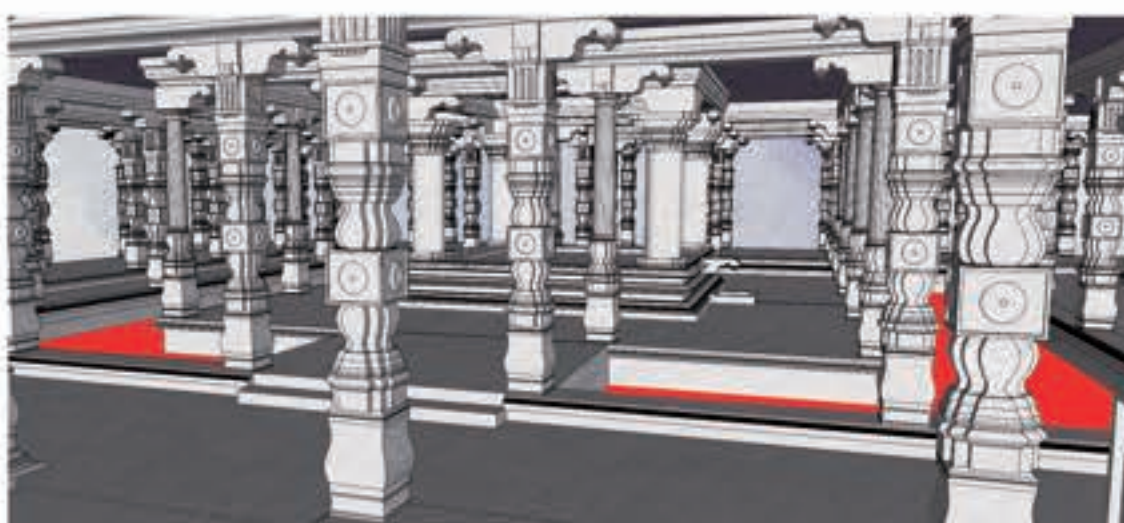
**SOUTH ELEVATION**



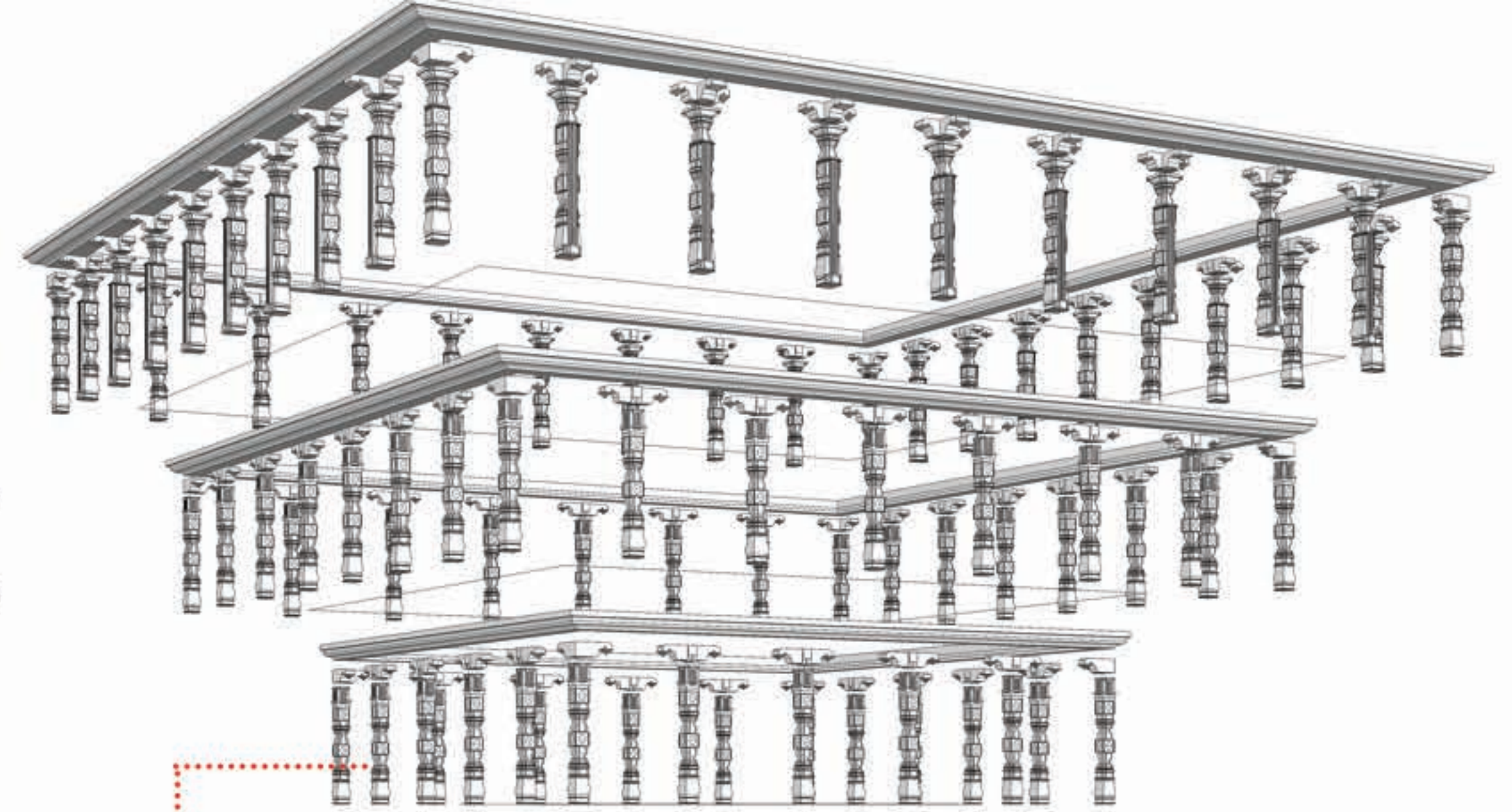
**WEST ELEVATION**



**NORTH ELEVATION**



**#7**



Surrounding all sides around the pavillion is a colonnade.

The majestic colonnade around consist of 100 pillars.

This depression is filled with water during the summer.

The atmosphere inside the mandapam is always cool

**EXPLODED VIEW**

**KEY PLAN**



**NELLAIAPPAR  
TEMPLE**

**VASANTHA MANDAPAM**



# PILLARS IN NELLAIPPAR TEMPLE / PANDIYAN ARCHITECTURAL

## SIGNIFICANT PILLARS:

- musical pillars in mani mandapam
- 1000 pillared hall
- life like sculptures in sangili mandapam
- 100 pillars in vasantha mandapam
- 96 pillars in unjal mandapam
- 78 pillars in somavara mandapam



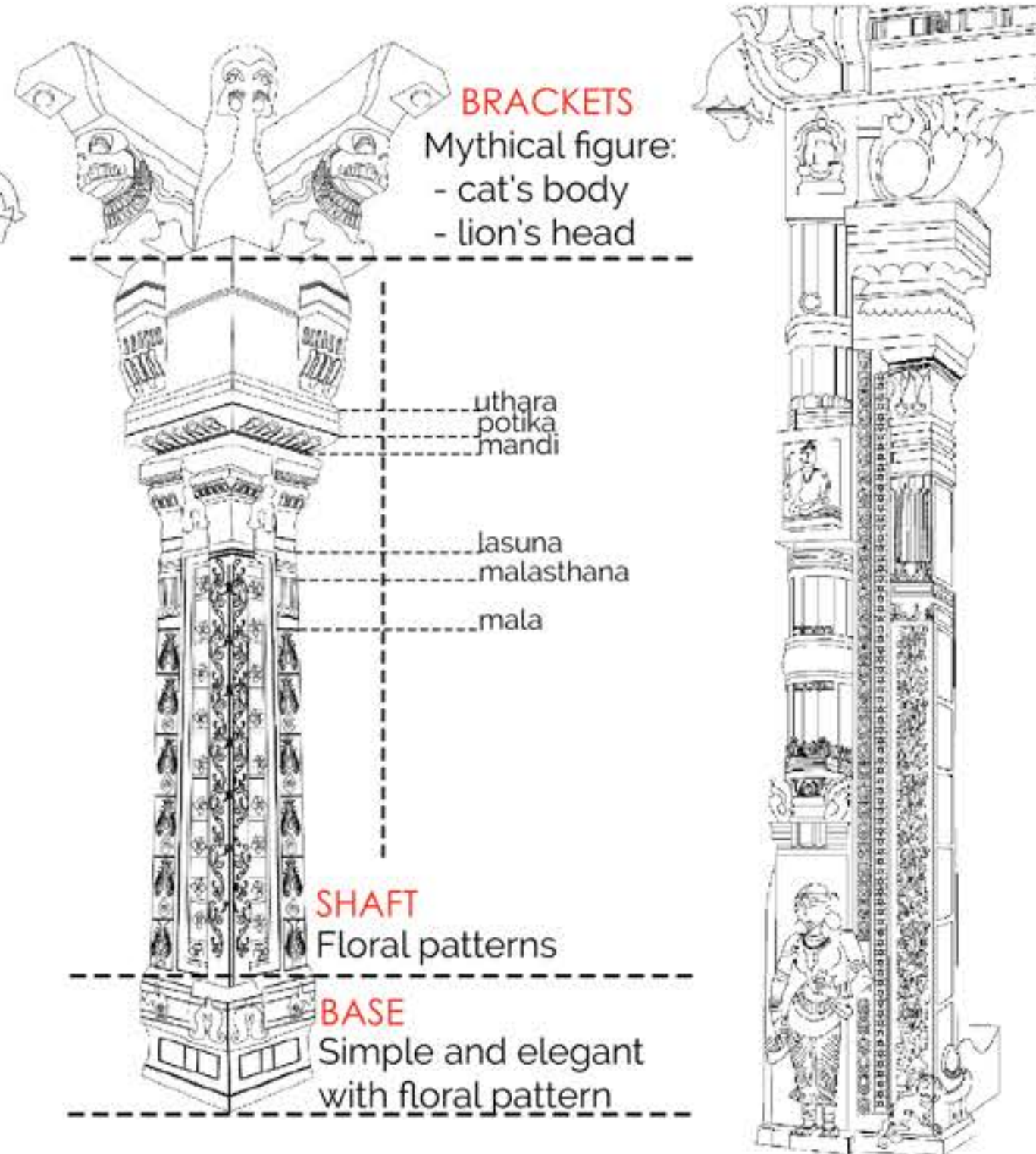
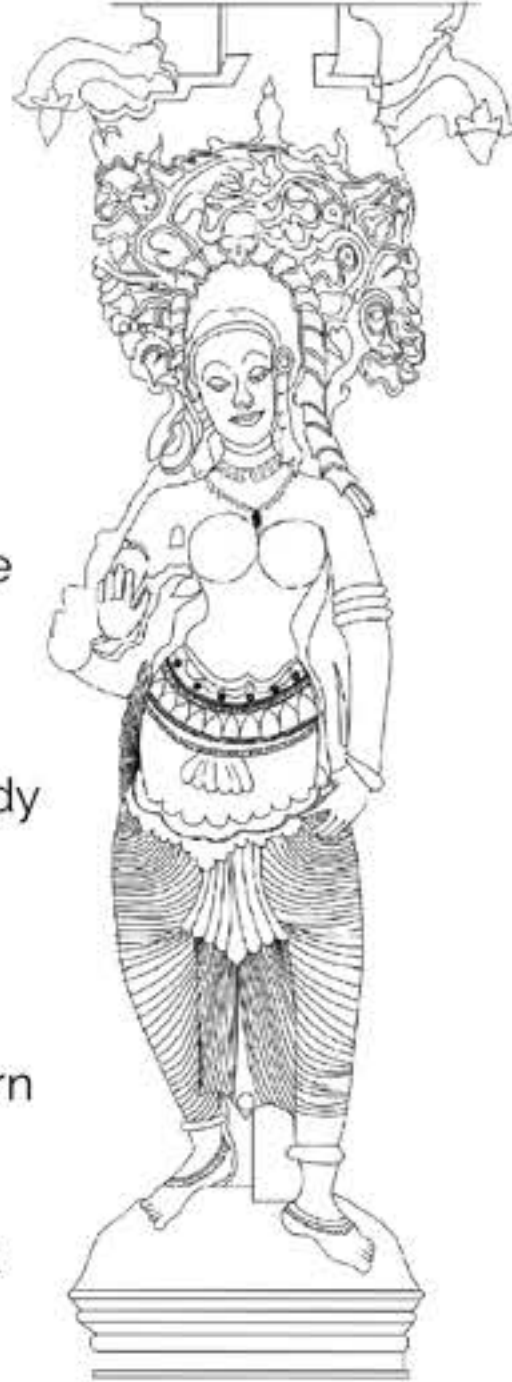
the pillar has a yali carved on it .

yali is believed to be the gaurd of the temple.

it is made of the body parts of differnt animals.

it is mostly used in southern and eastern parts of india.

each yali is different from the other.



## PILLARS MAKE MUSIC

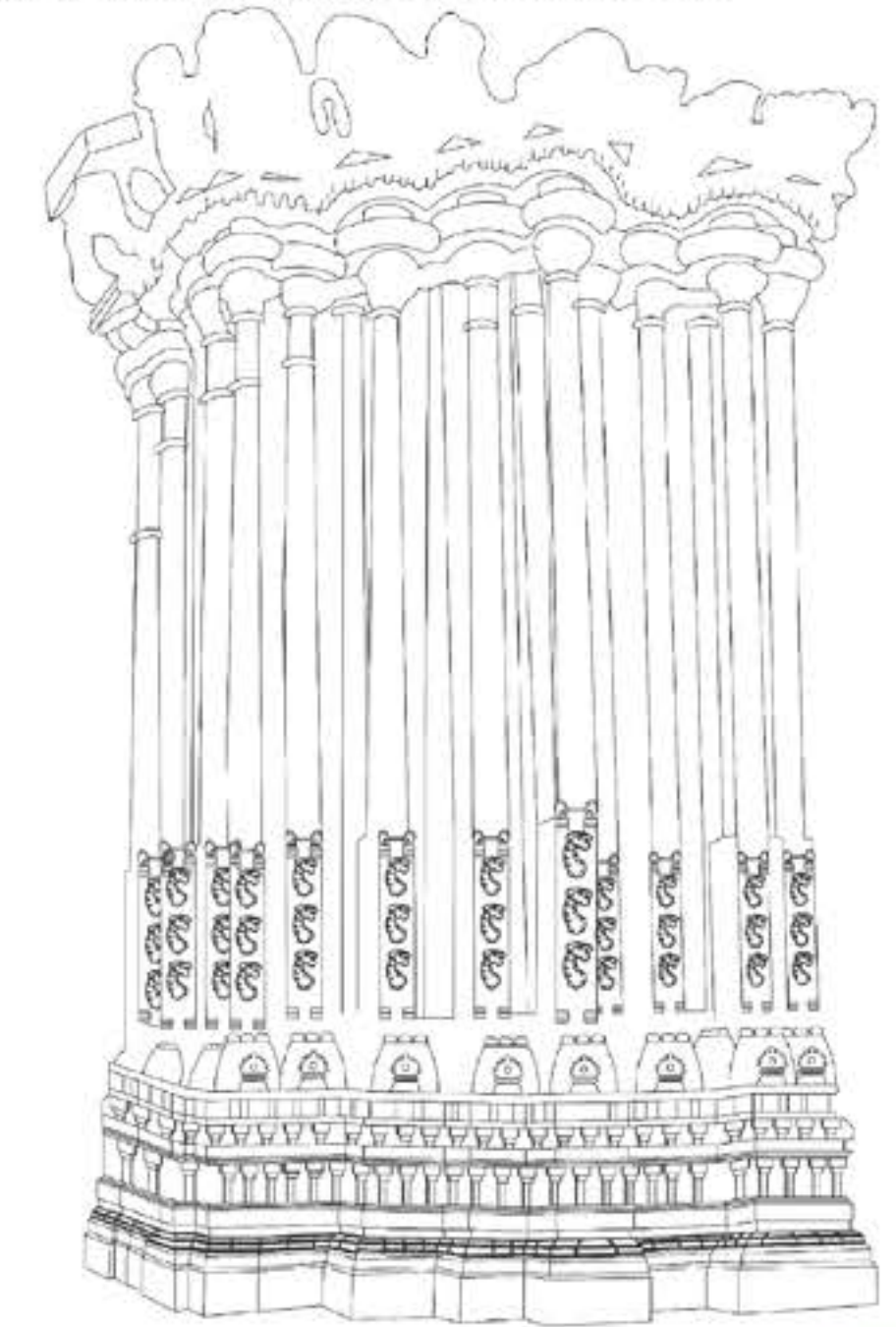
The **musical pillars** in nellaippar temple are one of the most attractive parts.

there are two pillars. They are made by single stone. Each pillar has one big pillar in the center and small pillars of different sizes and shape around it.

There are 48 small pillars. Each one produces a different sound or suram like sa, re, da, sa, sa, re, na, sa, da, re, sa, de, na, ma ne, pa, na, sa,, da, pa, da, ma

In the South though, several temples boast of such pillars, like those at Azhavar Thirunagari, Tenkasi, Kalakaadu, Kuttralam, Shenbagarama Nallur, Suseendaram near Kanyakumari, Thiruvananthapuram and Madurai.

But the pillars of Tirunelveli stand out.



## PILLARS BEFORE THE SHRINE



### Pagadai raja

he was a great strategist named saguni.

he held the sword in a different way.

The sculptures was carved with intricate detailings of veins.

he held a weapon called vaanga on his left hand.



### Virabhadhran

he is the incarnation of shiva that depicts anger.

he has a sharp sword in one hand which he used to kill demons.



### karnan

karnan was born with kundalas (earrings)and kavacha (armour).

his chariot touched the ground during the war.

he was given the celestial bow vijaya by parashuraman. he possessed the nagastra.



### Arjuna

Arjuna was a great warrior .he has a bow on his left hand.

his chariot did not touch the ground during kurukshetra war.

he was a eunuch for a year during his exile .

NELLAIPPAR  
TEMPLE

#8 PILLAR STYLE